

Family: HALIOTIDAE

Haliotis ovina Gmelin

Several specimens, indistinguishable from any other lot, were in the shipment. There was nothing noted to separate this population of the species from lots collected over the general range.

(?) Haliotis crebiscalpta Sowerby

Two examples of what the writer refers to as this species were present. A very similar shell, perhaps a geographical race at the most, has been noted from the Capricorn Group and the Keppel Islands, both off the Queensland Coast. Some have identified these as H. dissona Iredale, while others have referred to them as a new and undescribed species. The Swain's Reef specimens in coloration were a rusty red, with few maculations, compared to other Australian lots, which are red with strong maculations of green and gray. The New Caledonian specimens examined were gray-green with red or rusty maculations. The two shells were less lamellose than Australian specimens, yet were more highly sculptured than the New Caledonian specimens. In other words, they appear to be an intermediate cline between two populations, except for coloration. As Swain's Reef is well offshore and closer to New Caledonia than the two other known localities, such an intermediate cline could be expected.

SAN DIEGO

The new Club formed in San Diego in November, 1960, elected the following officers at its regular meeting in January, 1961: John Souder, President; David L. Leighton, Vice-President; Mrs. Kay Webb (730 Date Avenue, Chula Vista), Secretary-Treasurer. Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month, starting at 7:30 p. m. The Junior Naturalists room of the Museum of Natural History in Balboa Park is headquarters for the Club, which had 64 enrolled members as of February 9, 1961.

Information Desk

What's the Difference?

by

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In the course of a few years a variety of manuscripts and letters pass across an editor's desk. Many interesting problems come along with these, some serious and some not so serious. Sometimes it is quite apparent that the more or less un-careful use of the English language intrudes into the writing of persons who know better, and they are thus misled into expressing themselves inaccurately or even into making a completely incorrect statement. We propose to bring up, from time to time, such points which seem to cause embarrassment or even worse. For today we pick, at random, a pair of words: type and typical.

The word "type" in taxonomic literature is used to designate the (usually unique) specimen upon which a species or subspecies is founded, the specimen which served as the "model" for the author when describing the new taxon. There are, of course, a number of different "types", such as holotype, paratype, etc. A future article in this column will deal with these. The word "type" in essentially the same sense is also used in combinations, such as type species, type genus, type locality. The type specimen, as already implied, is the one specimen which was before the author at the time he described his new species or other taxon. A type species is that species upon which a genus is founded and, similarly, the type genus is the basis for the family. The type locality is that geographical location from which the type specimen was collected. According to the rules of the International Committee on Nomenclature no one can ever change the type specimen, the type species, the type genus or the type locality as originally established. It is true, the type specimen may be assigned to a wrong genus or the same species may have been validly described previously and thus the new description with the new name becomes invalid, but the type specimen remains

valid, no matter what may happen. In many instances the original type specimen became lost — what has to be done in that case will be discussed later. In earlier days particularly, new species were described without knowledge of the place where the type specimen was collected. If at a later date the same species is again found alive, it is then the prerogative of the first person aware of the fact that no original type locality is known, to designate a type locality on the basis of the new find.

The word typical is used correctly in taxonomic writing only to refer to matters which are like the "type". It is never to be used as a synonym for type. In fact, it is conceivable that the type specimen may not be typical for the species but be actually one of possibly many extreme variants. This applies especially to type localities. As pointed out, the type locality is the geographical location whence the type specimen comes. This location may be at the very extreme of the range of a species, where only a rare representative may be picked up. The typical location would be about in the middle of the total range of distribution of the species. But the literature is full of type localities which are not typical. It is not permissible to change the "type locality" of a species simply because the typical locality is elsewhere. The only situation under which a "type locality" may ever be changed would be one where it can be shown conclusively that the original designation of the type locality was in error and that the type specimen indeed came from a locality different from the one originally stated. Such situations did actually arise in some of the earlier expeditions when bottles may have become mixed up during a long voyage and the describer, who most likely was not on the voyage, had to rely on the information supplied him. We have, for example, Hawaiian species of mollusks described as from California, just as there are species collected in the Azores listed with "California" as type locality (or "Habitat" as it was called in earlier years).

Methods & Techniques

A Method for Collecting Limpets, Slippershells and Similar Forms

by

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While shore collecting at San Luis Gonzaga Bay, Baja California, a few years ago I found an exceptionally well preserved specimen of Crucibulum scutellatum attached to a rock estimated to weigh five to ten pounds.

After unsuccessfully attempting to remove the shell I placed the rock in my collecting bag, but it wasn't long until the extra weight was more than I wanted to continue to carry. It then occurred to me that perhaps the shell would move if given the proper stimulus, so after inverting the rock I held the shell in the flame of a match. After the fifth match the animal did move and was easily detached from the rock.

More recently, while on a collecting trip to Puertocitos, Baja California, with Dr. Bruce Campbell, I had an opportunity to try a modification of the "heat" treatment.

Dr. Campbell carries a small propane cylinder in his repair kit for use as a soldering torch. When the flame of this was gently directed at several species of small limpets the steam generated between the animal and the shell literally blew the shell off, leaving the animal still attached to the rock. Examination failed to reveal damage to the shell.

This method is especially helpful in removing shells nestled in depressions or crevices in the rocks.

